

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3226

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SUVA

UNCLAS LONDON 10752

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/NE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, EIVN, NH, UK, FR

SUBJECT: NEW HEBRIDES LAND DEALS

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF LETTER FROM E.N. LARMOUR  
(UNDER SECRETARY, PACIFIC DEPENDENT TERRITORIES  
DEPARTMENT, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE) TO  
WILLIAM WEEMS, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO SENATOR  
INOUE. PLEASE PASS TEXT TO WEEMS. ORIGINAL FOLLOWS  
BY POUCH ADDRESSED TO CARROLL FLOYD, EUR/NE.

BEGIN QUOTE

WHEN WE MET HERE ON 18 JUNE I PROMISED THAT WE WOULD  
LET YOU HAVE A GENERAL STATEMENT ABOUT OUR POLICY  
CONCERNING LAND SUB-DIVISION IN THE NEW HEBRIDES AS SOON  
AS THE QUESTION HAD BEEN CONSIDERED BY MINISTERS OF THE  
PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

IT MUST, OF COURSE, AS I EXPLAINED TO YOU, BE OUR FIRST  
CONCERN TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE  
NEW HEBRIDES. AFTER FULL CONSIDERATION OF ALL ASPECTS  
OF THE MATTER, INCLUDING THE REPRESENTATIONS PUT FORWARD  
IN THE MEMORANDUM YOU LEFT WITH ME AND EXPANDED BY  
YOURSELF IN ORAL DISCUSSION, AND FOLLOWING FURTHER  
CONSULTATION WITH THE BRITISH RESIDENT COMMISSIONER IN  
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VILA, MINISTERS HAVE EXPRESSED THEMSELVES AS BEING

SATISFIED THAT THE JOINT (ANGLO/FRENCH) LEGISLATION CONCERNING LAND SUB-DIVISION IS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO THE FUTURE WELL-BEING OF THE NEW HEBRIDEAN PEOPLE. THEY ARE SATISFIED TOO THAT THE BRITISH AND FRENCH RESIDENT COMMISSIONERS WERE JUSTIFIED IN JOINTLY REFUSING TO APPROVE THE RURAL SUB-DIVISION SCHEMES.

MINISTERS HAVE ASKED ME TO ASSURE SENATOR INOUE THAT THE JOINT LEGISLATION ON SUB-DIVISIONS AND THE DECISIONS MADE FOLLOWING IT WERE IN NO WAY INTENDED TO BE DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST UNITED STATES CITIZENS - THEY WOULD APPLY EQUALLY WHATEVER THE NATIONALITY OF THE WOULD BE PURCHASERS OF PLOTS. TO HAVE ALLOWED THE SUB-DIVISIONS TO PROCEED COULD HAVE MEANT THE EVENTUAL INTRODUCTION OF SEVERAL THOUSAND NEW EXPATRIATE LAND-OWNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES, WITH A DIFFERENT CULTURE AND A MUCH HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING, INTO A TERRITORY WHERE THE LOCAL POPULATION NUMBERS ONLY SOME 90,000. THIS WOULD, MOREOVER, HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT A TIME OF FAST GROWING POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG THE LOCAL INHABITANTS, FOR WHOM THE OWNERSHIP OF LAND BY NON-NEW HEBRIDEANS IS A HIGHLY EMOTIVE ISSUE. THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUB-DIVISIONS WOULD, THEREFORE, HAVE BEEN FAR-REACHING AND UNACCEPTABLE. ONCE THE FRENCH AND BRITISH AUTHORITIES IN THE NEW HEBRIDES APPRECIATED THE MAGNITUDE AND PURPOSE OF THE SCHEMES OF SUB-DIVISION PLANNED IT WAS CLEAR THAT ACTION HAD TO BE TAKEN TO CONTROL THEM.

I SYMPATHISE WITH THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE WOULD BE PURCHASERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO OBTAIN VALID TITLES; THEY DO, HOWEVER, HAVE A REMEDY AGAINST THE DEVELOPERS AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEW HEBRIDES LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION HAS ALREADY CONTEMPLATED BRINGING A CLASS ACTION AGAINST SOME OF THEM.

I AM SORRY THAT WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SEND A MORE FAVOURABLE REPLY TO THE SENATOR'S REPRESENTATIONS, BUT, AS I HAVE SAID, HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT REGARD THE INTERESTS OF THE NEW HEBRIDEANS AS PARAMOUNT IN OUR

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CONSIDERATION OF THIS DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

END QUOTE.

SOHM

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## Message Attributes

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